R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 010 886 CG 000 013

FORCES INFLUENCING THE COUNSELOR'S ROLE.

BY- MOLER, DONALD

ILLINOIS STATE OFF. SUPT. PUB. INSTR., SPRINGFIELD

PUB DATE 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.56 14P.

DESCRIPTORS- *COUNSELORS, *COUNSELOR ROLE, HELPING RELATIONSHIP, COUNSELING, CONSULTANTS, COMMUNITY RESOURCES, COUNSELOR CERTIFICATION, COUNSELOR PREPARATION, SPRINGFIELD

DEFINING THE ROLE OF A COUNSELOR IS A TASK WHICH IS COMPLICATED BY THE CHANGING WORLD, THE CHANGING SOCIAL STRUCTURE, AND THE INFLUENCES OF GOVERNMENT. THE ROLE IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT COUNSELING HAS ORIGINATED FROM A VARIETY OF DISCIPLINES, BORROWING FROM THE JOB OF THE TEACHER, THE ADMINISTRATOR, THE SOCIAL WORKER, AND THE PSYCHOLOGIST. CERTIFICATION IS NEEDED AND NATIONAL STANDARDS SHOULD BE SET UP. ALSO, THERE IS A NEED FOR GREATER COHESION BETWEEN VARIOUS COUNSELOR TRAINING PROGRAMS EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF VARYING SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY NEEDS. THE KINDS OF ROLES THE COUNSELOR SHOULD PERFORM ARE TO ACT AS A MEMBER OF THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM, TO PROVIDE HELPING RELATIONSHIPS FOR STUDENTS, TO SERVE AS A PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT TO THE STAFF, PARENTS, TEACHERS, CHILDREN, AND PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY, TO BE ABLE TO DEVELOP AND MANAGE A GUIDANCE PROGRAM, AND TO SERVE AS A RESOURCE PERSON MAKING CONTACTS WITH HOSPITALS, USING COMMUNITY RESOURCES, AND FINDING PSYCHOLOGISTS. IN THE FUTURE, DIFFERING LEVELS OF COUNSELOR ACTIVITY WILL EXIST AND THE TERM COUNSELOR MAY BE CHANGED TO MORE ACCURATELY REFLECT THE NATURE OF COUNSELING ACTIVITIES. THIS IS ONE OF THE REPORTS FROM THE ZION CONFERENCE AND THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DEMONSTRATION CENTERS INCLUDED IN "ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE IN ILLINOIS." (PS)

CG 000 013

ED010886

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE IN ILLINOIS

Reports from the Zion Conference and The Elementary School Demonstration Centers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Prepared By

Department of Guidance Services
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Issued By

Ray Page
Superintendent of Public Instruction

FORCES INFLUENCING THE COUNSELOR'S ROLE

Donald Moler*

CG 000 013

Doctor Moler is concerned with the various forces impinging upon the school counselor and their influence in identifying his role. He presents some basic questions and utilizes a number of very realistic examples to illustrate the range of influences and distractions affecting the counselor.

DO WE COMPREHEND?

The impact of modern advances on schools and children is overwhelming. I walked into my home not too long ago and there was my son in front of the television set with his eyes bulging out, and do you know what he was doing? He was saying word for word, with the actor on the screen, the script that he was reading.

I said to him, "What in the world is going on here?"

He said, "I've seen this one twice before". "Well, tell me about it", I said.

You know, he described in great detail what was going to happen. The actor was going to go open the door; the villain was going to step out behind him and konk him over the head.

Now, whether you like viewing television or not, it's something we all do; it's part of our lives. And here is a factor that this child has never been without. His entire life has been colored, in a sense, by television. For him, it is common place to look up and see men dropping out of the sky into the ocean after having made several orbits of the earth. This is the only world he has known, and if this is not a complicating factor in terms of some of us old people who can remember when radio was kind of a marvel, then I would like you to reflect with me until we can find something that is complicated.

REAL CONCERNS

Another problem which is certainly background and realistic is the fact of the unrest in the entire world today. There was, perhaps, once a time when this country

* Doctor Donald Moler is Chairman of the Department of Guidance and Counseling, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston.

of ours was a little quieter than it is now. I don't think America or the United States, in particular, has ever been a very quiet place. It seems to me that every generation has had its own special problems and has described them as being problems of great importance and much seriousness, and I do not intend to detract from those of the past.

But I would like to point out that today's problems are unique in the fact that there are so many of them, and that they are coming from all directions at this time. It is a fact that technological change has led to problems in the breakdown of the family and other institutions as we know them. The family that you lived in when you were a child and the family that I lived in when I was a child, no longer exists. They cannot. Today's parent worries whether or not his child has driven safely the two hundred or three hundred miles to go to a large city and wonders whether he might be there or someplace else. This was no problem when I was a boy. Our families did not even have a car. I did not even have a car until I was old enough to earn the money to pa for it myself. With my life and my background, my problems could not remotely be similar to those problems. Now this is one of those things that we have to work on and recognize as inescapable, and that changes have come and are with us.

GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE: PROGRESS OR IMPEDIMENTS

We have another problem, though I would hesitate to call it a problem. I am referring to the stress upon government participation in education. For example, I am speaking here today at the invitation of the State Office of Education. We have with us members who are representatives of the Federal Office of Education. And this is a very real kind of impetus to the problem that we are talking about; the doctrines of government being injected into the role of the counselor as it develops. Now, quite honestly, these things are not bad; I don't mean to imply that they are, in fact I would go along with those who say that perhaps the only way that the government can be of most

help is to participate. I am not one of those who thinks the best government is "hands off" all the time. If this were the case, we might make very little progress in some areas. But these still are factors that have to be considered. The world is different; there are many things which are different. Along with this, we have to note that the difficulties of education have not been solved and that the counselor himself represents an effort to solve some of the problems.

SITUATION MAY DEFINE ROLE

Now, how do we go about talking about the counselor and his role? Some people will say that there are as many different roles as there are counselors, and this may be an extreme position. Let me point out some of the things that have been indicated as roles counselors play. Some of you, as counselors, can agree with some of the roles I may define. They suggest some of the activities you may participate in and some you may not. For example, one counselor I know does a great deal of substitute teaching. Do any of you as counselors perform this way? Is this an appropriate counselor role? I assure you that in one school it is. It is this role or nothing.

I know another counselor who supervises the lunch room on a regular basis. This is part of the guidance function for him.

I know a counselor who works with the principal quite closely, in fact he runs errands for him. He might be classified as his right-hand-man. The understanding here is not that the counselor works directly with the students, but that he works directly with the principal. Is this a counselor's role? Well, obviously it is.

I know a counselor who spent a good deal of one spring computing the grade point averages for every senior in the class so that they could award the scholarships and decide where the cutoff line was for the upper-third and so on. Is this a

legitimate counselor function? Is this the counselor role? During this period, he was practically inaccessible to the students in the school.

Not too long ago, while we were conducting a practicum, we went to a high school trying to find the counselor in charge. I wanted to talk with him about some problems the students had reported to me. I couldn't find him. He wasn't in his office and no one seemed to know where he was. I hung around for a matter of maybe thirty- or forty-five minutes hoping to see him. He never did show up. When he finally got back, I had left word for him to call and he called my home about six-thirty and he said that he had been out hunting a student who had been involved in an altercation in the locker room, and they wanted to find him. Is this a counselor role?

Now I have indicated some of the way-out kinds of jobs that counselors do. I ask you to think rather carefully; are these roles of counselors realistic; are they legitimate? Should there be counselor roles?

WHO IS IN AGREEMENT?

One of the things that is on the opposite side of this forum is the fact that if you ask people what the counselor role should be; what do they tell you? If I ask any one of you here what the counselor's role should be, I would guess what the answer is going to be. You'll say he should meet students in a face-to-face relationship. Counseling should be his prime role. Everyone agrees with this. Yet, if this is the case, why are all of these other roles injected into the situation? How does it happen? Why is it that you can tell me that the counselor is supposed to be counseling the students, when as a matter of fact, he very often is not counseling the students. He is keeping records or doing something else. Now, principals would say the same thing. I feel confident that if I were to ask a principal in the school, "What should the counselor be doing?", he would say, "Why he ought to be working with the students

and their problems". And yet, this may be the very principal who keeps the counselor from doing this kind of job.

ROLE DEFINITION: EONS AWAY?

I would say here that we have a problem in defining the role of the counselor. We have a difficult thing to overcome. It would seem that if we know the problems then we know what the role should be. But we really ought to have a better chance to make some kind of judgment as to what the counselor should be doing. We would like to believe, as a profession, that the role of the counselor is definable. I am one of those who form an opinion that some of the problems involved are almost overwhelming, and that we have a long, long way to go, at least as I see it, before we'll be sure of what the counselor's role is.

Let me point out some of the contributing factors which make this so. For one thing, secondary school counseling, as such, originated from a variety of disciplines. It is actually true that some of the work of the counselor, which we consider legitimate, has been borrowed from what used to be the job of the administrator. Some of the jobs of the counselor have been taken from what used to be the task of the teacher. Some of what the counselor does has been taken from the psychologist. Some of it has been taken from the social worker. And probably, if we really looked at it, some of it has been taken from the pupils themselves.

Now, with the sufficient kind of background, it seems entirely logical then that we should be able to make a clean-cut definition of what the counselor's role might be. At best, it's going to be a difficult task, and at worst, could be a task which is impossible. I do think that we must not expect that this definition will be made quickly or easily, because as I see the functions of counselors being misused, I can see this could be a job for a psychologist, teacher, or the administrator.

TEACHER PLACEMENT

Another thing which is pressing in this same area is this: We have not really taken the teacher out of the counselor's role. In fact, not too long ago a book was published recounting the teacher's role in guidance. Do not misunderstand. I feel that the teacher has a role, but when the public sees this book, or when an uninformed person reads this book, what conclusion does he make? He makes the conclusion that the teacher and only the teacher is the counselor.

I would have to say this teaching role is not the primary guidance role. In some cases it might be. It depends entirely upon the situation. We still have the teacher very much in the counseling picture, and this is a little like making the nurse the center of the medical picture. It just would not work. We are in trouble until a clear-cut definition of the counselor's role is determined.

CERTIFICATION VARIATIONS

There are some other things which are common problems. One of the big ones is the difference in special certification standards. I am happy to see that there is a movement toward uniformity. But I must honestly say, that if I were to make in my own judgment the best kind of adaptation here, I would have to say, "Sirs, what are you doing about some national standards for counselors?"

I like the idea of state economy, but until we get some feeling that this is nationwide, I have the uncomfortable feeling that defining counseling here may not be quite the same as defining counseling in Mississippi. I have the feeling that defining counseling in a surburban area is not going to be the same as defining counseling in some other areas. The definition of a counselor in Chicago is not quite the same as the definition of counselor as it's defined downstate. One of the problems that we have to consider is the fact that nationwide certification varies tremendously. The order of

the rules under which we play the game are considerably different from one place to another. And because this is true, I feel that the problem of defining the counselor's role is going to be difficult until we have nationwide uniformity. I do not want uniformity at the expense of quality. These standards have to be reasonably the same and reasonably alike.

COHESION: COUNSELOR EDUCATION

The next problem: counselor preparation programs. I do not think we are doing a very good job in all areas of counselor education. The problem here is that we have all kinds of counselor education programs, and again no uniformity. I have taught in schools which pride themselves on saying, "Our counselor education program is very broad. We include diversified fields." And this is the strength on which they build it. Then I can show you a program which says, "Ours is one in depth." They go right down one track and practically nothing else is included.

Now, both of these people may be right; they may have good things on their side. But here again, it is saying in a sense, one is preparing a specialist, one is preparing a generalist. Although they are in the same field, it is comparable to a skin specialist probing into my eye. Until we come to a kind of agreement as to where we are going in the counselor planning program, I believe we have a difficult time defining counselor roles, partly because the people who are shirking counselor roles right now do not agree as to what the role should be. Their programs indicate that they do not agree with one another in terms of pinpointing this definition.

Our search for higher standards comes at an awkward time. It is very wrong for us to say and to write as we have copiously that it is desirable to have two-year preparation programs for counselors. This is a tough thing. To have two-year preparation programs we reduce the numbers of people we can accommodate and we also take people out of the fields to come back to get their second year of preparation

at a time when the demand and call for counselors is rapidly increasing.

Now, what does this lead to? Well, it leads to temporary certification in many states. In many states, the people designated as counselors have only one or two courses in guidance. And there are not a few of those; there are hundreds of them. This is at a time when they are asking for two years of the minimum preparation.

Now don't misunderstand. I am in favor of the high goals. I am pointing out that this makes defining the counselor role a little tough. Is the counselor actually the man who has two years, who's had a good practicum and internship behind him, or is the counselor the man with two courses who is out in the school actually facing kids every day?

I will not try to answer this question, but I want you to see that this is a problem of defining roles that is very demanding. And as we expand and demand higher qualifications, we are also faced with the problem of whether or not low-qualified people are competent or whether they even belong in the profession.

IMPACT DIVERSIFICATION

In conclusion, I want to mention one other problem which will always be with us. This is the problem of the variation in the school programs. There is really no way to say whether or not an urban program and the rural program should be alike, except in broad principle. Quite often the schools themselves have been shaped in certain ways, historically. Reshaping a school product that fails to make a pattern that will permit the counselor to fit into a certain niche is an extremely difficult task. You are fighting tradition; you are fighting the things that people are used to; you are fighting the things they have approved of for many years, and in many cases the counselor or the guidance director simply takes whatever little niche is assigned to him. The cry for uniformity in the schools may not be well received by

many people. But until such time as there is uniformity in school programs, it will be very difficult to define the counselor's role within these programs.

PUPILS VIEWS

I would like to close by giving you a brief summary of things that students believe may be the possible points of agreement with regard to what the counselor's role should be. Personally, I feel that these represent very valid and tenable statements.

Number one says that the counselor should have a role as a member of an education team. Many people seem to forget the fact that the counselor is a school person. I have knowledge of some preparation programs that I feel are violating this idea. I think they are trying to make clinical psychologists out of some of their counselors. I do not know if the clinical psychologist really has a place on the staff of the public school. I will not argue the point. I have a feeling that we must not lose sight of this idea that the school program and the educational team in the school program is an important facet.

The second point made is that counselors should provide helping relationships for students. This is so universally accepted, I think it needs no more discussion.

The third statement is the fact of being a professional consultant to the staff, to parents, to teachers, to children, and to people in the community on problems which concern them. This is an activity to which we give a lot of lip service and fortunately I do not know many counselors who spend much of their time serving as professional consultants. Counselors have been reluctant to make themselves readily available and to offer their services.

A fourth point is the development and management of guidance programs. This is, again, one of those self-evident things, counselors should be able to develop and manage a guidance program.

And the last point is quite a real one. One role that many counselors have performed, and performed well, is that of serving as a resource person. The counselor makes the contacts which are necessary. He makes the contacts with the hospitals, if necessary; he uses the community resources; he is the one who finds the psychologist, if he can find one, for the child who is disturbed; he makes the arrangements for what is needed for the civic doctor to help the child in need.

These are kinds of roles a counselor could perform. I think you could take some issue with almost all of these. But for me, I like this listing, and I would say that I feel we have a chance for a future in defining the role in this manner.

How much of each of these activities are roles the counselor engages in? This leads again to a question. Do we have specialists to do these things in some cases? These things are yet to be decided, but I think they can be decided. Possibly, the future will see some levels of counselor activity. Now this is an idea that has been suggested by many people. We have a counselor for junior grades, for senior grades, and the master counselor. The possibilities are here.

SUMMARY

Well, in summary, what do we see? Defining the role of a counselor is a task which is complicated tremendously by our changing world, the changing social structure, the influences of government, the actual history of the guidance program as it is evolved in the secondary school, problems of certification and training, the search for higher standards, and variation in school programs and community needs. All of these are problems lurking in the background which makes our work in definition of the counselor role quite difficult.

I would like to leave you with one thought that is entirely possible, as I view it. We may have to change the name of the person who is doing the guidance

work from counselor to something else. The name counselor and guidance worker are tied up, at the moment, with different names and different thoughts for various people.

The elementary role, if it is properly defined, will keep us from falling into all the traps and pitfalls that we have had to encounter in the work in defining the counselor's role in the secondary school. I would hope that we can define the elementary counselor's role soon enough so that we will not trap ourselves again. To do this we are going to need the help of all the agencies we can get; the schools, the counselors, the state and national offices of education.